

Meet Lusiana Cawai

Fiji

SHARE

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Lusiana Cawai is one of the 25 scholarship recipients enrolled in a Certificate Level IV program at the South Pacific Academy of Beauty Therapy, with support from Pacific Women. Photo: Shazia Usman, Pacific Women Support Unit.

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Eighteen-year-old Lusiana Cawai is a student of the South Pacific Academy of Beauty Therapy. With support from Pacific Women, she and 24 other students are scholarship recipients enrolled in a Certificate Level IV program run by the Academy. The scholarship provides formal education opportunities for rural women from around Fiji. Lusiana and her fellow students have described this much needed financial assistance and training as life changing, as none of them would have been able to afford it based on their family's income status.

Tell us about yourself...

I'm from Rakiraki and I have two younger brothers. I was in Form 2 when my parents divorced. It was a difficult time for us, especially my mum, with no support from anyone so we moved from Lautoka where we were staying at the time, to our village in Rakiraki. My mum wasn't working then and had to sell crops in town so we could survive and pay for our education. My mum always struggled for us and had no financial support from our father.

How did you hear about the scholarship?

After I finished Form 6 last year, I helped my mum sell vegetables so we could pay my brothers education. I did that from January to March this year and also worked in a restaurant where I used to earn \$90.00 weekly.

We used to visit our auntie's place in Lautoka and it was her neighbour who told me about the scholarship to study beauty therapy. She encouraged me to apply because I had always wanted to become a beauty therapist after reading about it online.

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How has the course been for you so far?

In the three months since I have been here, I have learnt so much. I have learnt how to do massage, manicure, pedicure, waxing, facials, body treatment and plenty of other things. I like the theory part too. Some things can be hard but the trainers are always ready to help. The students also help because we are all good friends now.

Where do you see yourself in the next couple of years?

After I finish my studies, I would love to work in other Pacific islands, such as the Cook Islands. I want to earn money and hopefully save up to do a diploma. It would also be nice to become a trainer one day.

How important is it for women to be economically independent?

It's very important. There are some men who leave their wives and children and it's the wives who have to struggle to take care of everything and everyone. Then there are also men who don't leave but who misuse money and don't contribute to education or food. It's very important for women to earn money so they can take of themselves and their families.

What the some of the biggest challenges women in your community face?

Women in my village have a lot of responsibilities. They have to wake up very early in the morning, make food, get the children ready for school and then make their way to the market or town to sell their crops. They have to take care of everyone in the house and also earn money.